

# Sixty years of Laughlin heritage



## Wing coin:

Learn the symbolism of the wing coin, which commemorates Laughlin's 60th anniversary.

**Page 9**

## Time line:

Take a photo tour and learn about Laughlin's history, which spans six decades of events, people and places.

**Page 10**



1st Lt. Jack T. Laughlin

## Namesake:

Learn the story behind the man after whom Laughlin Air Force Base is named.

**Page 6**



Maj. Rudolf Anderson

## A real hero:

Learn the history of Maj. Rudolf Anderson, who became a Laughlin and American hero during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Page 8**



Maj. Ribas-Dominicci

## Man of honor:

Learn how a Laughlin student pilot became a fallen hero 10 years after he graduated undergraduate pilot training.

**Page 9**

## Base and Del Rio share past, future

**By Col. Rick Rosborg**  
*47th Flying Training Wing  
Commander*

Laughlin Air Force Base has a rich history. It is a history of the U.S. Air Force, as well as a history of this region. While the base was named after Lt. Jack Laughlin, the first member of the Del Rio community to lose his life in World War II, we share much more than a name with Del Rio.

We know the Air Force selected this location to train pilots when they were needed at a critical time in our nation's history. Over the course of the last 60 years, Laughlin has been involved

in not only training operations, but also operational missions, as evidenced by the fact that the only fatality during the Cuban Missile Crisis was Maj. Rudolf Anderson, a Laughlin-based U-2 pilot who was shot down over Cuba. In recognition of that mission and the history it represents, last fall we named our Operations Training Complex Anderson Hall in honor of Maj. Anderson.

The men and women who have passed through Laughlin Air Force Base over the last 60 years have contributed to our Air Force and our nation, during the course of World War II, the Korean War,

Vietnam, and a long and ultimately successful Cold War. Now members of Laughlin are participating in the War against Terrorism.

We have a tremendous relationship with the Del Rio community, we share common goals and we have a common future. For 60 years we've lived in the community, as well as trained here. We have wonderful memories of the time we spent here, and many of us have not only passed through Del Rio, we've come back. Regardless of whether you're in Del Rio once or more, one thing is certain: We all carry a piece of Del Rio with us in our hearts when we leave.

## Past commanders pass on congratulatory messages

**H**appy 60th Laughlin! Through the years Laughlin has been a blueprint for success. Great mission-oriented personnel coupled with strong community relations are the primary ingredients for that success. Across the Air Force we have people that are alumni of Laughlin as student pilots, or civilians and military personnel that have been stationed there. When you find someone has been to Laughlin there is an instant connection and the conversation quickly reflects on the team spirit, the local community and their support, the pride, and the closeness. So while the base is celebrating its' 60th it is the people over the years that made the difference. That is why Laughlin has a special place in the hearts of those of us who have traversed the base and Del Rio.

**Maj. Gen. Gary Winterberger,**  
Commander, NATO Airborne  
Early Warning and Control Force  
E-3A Component

**C**ongratulations on 60 years of the best base-community relations in the Air Force. The last 60 years have demonstrated to the rest of the Air Force how we can work together to accomplish a very important mission. Having served two assignments and more than five years at Laughlin, we truly love the base and the area. There is nothing better than the sound of a jet engine with the beautiful West Texas sunrise or sunset in the background.

Producing pilots for our country (and our allies) is a necessary and noble task. The 47th has done it better than anyone else over the years. I applaud what has gone on and encourage those involved in this mission now and in the future to continue the superb training that produces the best pilots in the world. Our Air Force cannot survive without the quality pilots you all train.

Sherry joins me in wishing the wing and the city of Del Rio con-

tinued success and felizédade.

Keep up the great work and continue to "XL."

**Brig. Gen. Dan Goodrich,**  
Air Force Headquarters Intelli-  
gence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance deputy director

**H**appy 60th Anniversary Laughlin! This is every bit an anniversary celebration for both Laughlin and the fair city of Del Rio. For 60 years you have teamed together to train combat airmen for our nation. I am so proud of Team Laughlin/Del Rio. I wish Moe and I could be there to celebrate with you. There is no place we would rather be stationed. Anybody down there want to trade places with me here in the Pentagon?

Warmest regards, my friends.

**Col. Jack Egginton,** Execu-  
tive officer to the Air Force Chief  
of Staff



### Editorial Staff

**Col. Rick Rosborg**  
*Commander*

**1st Lt. Paula Kurtz**  
*Public affairs chief*

**2nd Lt. Jessica Miller**  
*Internal information chief*  
**Senior Airman Brad Pettit**  
*Editor*

**Airman Timothy J. Stein**  
*Staff writer*

The Border Eagle is published every Friday, except the first week in January and the last week in December, by the Del Rio News Herald, a private firm in no way connected with the U. S. Air Force, under exclusive written contract with the 47th Flying Training Wing, Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas.

This civilian enterprise Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services.

Contents of the Border Eagle are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, the Department of the Air Force or the Del Rio News Herald of the products or services advertised. Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color or, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of the 47th Flying Training Wing. All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

#### Deadlines, Advertising

News for the Border Eagle should be submitted to the 47th Flying Training Wing Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 338, Laughlin AFB, TX, 298-5262. **Copy deadline is close of business each Thursday the week prior to publication.**

Advertising should be submitted to the Del Rio News-Herald, 2205 Bedell, Del Rio, TX, 774-4611. Advertising should be submitted by 4 p.m. each Friday.

Submissions can be e-mailed to:  
[bradley.pettit@laughlin.af.mil](mailto:bradley.pettit@laughlin.af.mil)  
[timothy.stein@laughlin.af.mil](mailto:timothy.stein@laughlin.af.mil)

***"Excellence –  
not our goal,  
but our  
standard."***

– 47th FTW motto

# Laughlin Air Force Base rich in history

Compiled from  
staff reports

On Sept. 26, 1942, the War Department activated an advanced flying training base seven miles east of Del Rio, Texas. Within a short time the station became a B-26 Marauder flying school. The field was designated Laughlin Army Air Field March 3, 1943. Three weeks later, on March 28, the field was dedicated in honor of Lt. Jack Thomas Laughlin, the first member of the Del Rio community to lose his life during World War II.

Laughlin died when ground fire downed his B-17 Jan. 29, 1942, over Java. After the war in Europe, there was no longer a need

for B-26 training, so the Army Air Forces Training Command closed the field in the fall of 1945.

The U.S. Air Force placed Laughlin Air Force Base in active status in May 1952 and assigned it to Air Training Command. Strategic Air Command also played a prominent role in Laughlin's history. The Air Force transferred the base to the jurisdiction of SAC April 1, 1957. At that time, the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing moved to Laughlin. The 4080th provided a high-altitude reconnaissance capability and gathered meteorological data from high altitudes for operational forecasting using the Lockheed U-2A and the RB-57D Canberra. A U-2 pilot from Laughlin brought

back the first conclusive evidence of the Soviet missile buildup in Cuba in October 1962.

In 1961 Headquarters U. S. Air Force notified Laughlin officials that their mission would expand to include an ATC undergraduate pilot training program. Command of Laughlin passed from SAC to ATC April 1, 1962, with the 4080th Strategic Wing remaining as a tenant unit until 1963.

Since that time, Laughlin has been in the continuous business of training pilots for the Air Force. ATC transferred 41 Cessna T-37 Tweets to Laughlin beginning in late 1961. The first UPT class arrived Nov. 20, 1961. Many other changes took place at Laughlin as the years went by. In February

1964, a permanent runway supervisory unit, the first of its kind in the Air Force, was installed at Laughlin. Also in 1964, ATC assigned the Northrop T-38 Talon to UPT and phased out the T-33. The 3646th Pilot Training Wing was deactivated and the 47th Flying Training Wing was activated Sept. 1, 1972. In 1979 a flight simulator complex at Laughlin opened to enhance student training. In 1986, the simulators converted to computer-generated imagery, providing cost savings and training realism. On April 2, 1990, the operations complex reorganized to prepare the way for specialized undergraduate pilot training, projected for implementation at Laughlin in fiscal year 1994. A new era began at Laughlin in 1993 as

the 47th Flying Training Wing SUPT brought on board the T-1A Jayhawk, the first new aircraft to be used at one of the command's flying training wings in more than 25 years. In 2002, the T-6A Texan is scheduled to arrive at Laughlin to replace the T-37 as the primary trainer.

Laughlin's mission has remained the same since 1962 – training top-quality military pilots. Beginning with the first class of undergraduate pilot training in December 1962, silver wings have now been pinned on more than 12,000 pilots. Throughout its many changes of jurisdiction and missions, Laughlin has contributed significantly to the nation's aeronautical progress.

# 47th Flying Training Wing dates back to 1947

Compiled from staff reports

The 47th Flying Training Wing has a proud history dating back to 1947. It was July 28, 1947, that the 47th Bombardment Wing was activated, with its organization taking place at Biggs Field, Texas, Aug. 15 1947. The 47th Bombardment Wing, Light, trained in night tactical operations, conducted firepower demonstrations, and participated in exercises in the B-26 between 1947 and 1949. In November 1948, the wing moved to Barksdale Air Force Base, La. In March 1949, the B-45 replaced the B-26 as the organization's tactical aircraft. The 47th was deactivated Oct. 2, 1949.

Tactical Air Command activated the wing at Langley Air Force Base, Va., March 12, 1951. In 1951-1952 the wing trained in light bombardment

operations in the B-45 aircraft, becoming proficient with nuclear weapons. The wing also provided combat crew training in the B-26 aircraft and operated the U.S. Air Force Air Crew School (Light Bombardment and Tactical Reconnaissance, Night Photographic). In mid-1952, the 47th moved to Sculthorpe, England. For the next decade, while attached to the 49th Air Division, the wing performed tactical training operations in the B-45 aircraft in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The 47th participated in exercises and firepower demonstrations preparing for its mission of impeding enemy attacks with nuclear power. During this time, the wing was redesignated as the 47th Bombardment Wing, Tactical. In 1958, the wing

transitioned from the B-45 to B-66 aircraft. The 47th was deactivated in June 1962.

On Sept. 1, 1972, Air Training Command activated the 47th Flying Training Wing at Laughlin Air Force

Base. The wing took up the mission of the discontinued 3646th Pilot Training Wing, which had been the host unit at Laughlin since 1962. UPT later became Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training in 1993.

47th Flying Training Wing Commanders

- Col. Charles E. Woods
- Col. Harry Falls Jr.
- Col. Lawrence D. Garrison
- Col. Ralf M. Miller
- Col. Chris O. Divich
- Col. Anthony J. Farrington Jr.
- Col. Albert A. Gagliardi Jr.
- Col. Jeffrey T. Ellis
- Col. John C. Griffith
- Col. Joseph S. Bleymaier Jr.
- Col. Willard Grosvenor
- Col. Donald G. Cook
- Brig. Gen. Kenneth W. Hess
- Col. Timothy A. Peppe
- Col. Gary A. Winterberger
- Col. Dan R. Goodrich
- Col. Winfield W. Scott III
- Col. Jack B. Egginton
- Col. Eric J. Rosborg

Date Assumed Command

- September 1972
- June 1973
- July 1975
- August 1975
- March 1979
- August 1981
- March 1983
- November 1984
- July 1986
- July 1987
- June 1989
- July 1991
- July 1992
- August 1994
- January 1996
- January 1998
- October 1999
- December 2000
- August 2001

*The 47th participated in exercises and firepower demonstrations preparing for its mission of impeding enemy attacks with nuclear power.*



# Laughlin has unique military aviation history

**By Jim Long**

*Laughlin Heritage Foundation chairman*

Laughlin Air Force Base has achieved a unique niche in American military aviation. Through the gates of this installation have passed some of the finest men and women our nation has to offer. They fought in the skies of Europe and the Pacific during World War II, in Korea during the Korean War, flew global strategic reconnaissance missions during the Cold War era, controlled the skies over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict and demonstrated to the world their excellence during Operation Desert Storm and now during current operations against terrorists.

Three presidents of the U.S. have visited Laughlin: Eisenhower, Johnson and Nixon. At least three U.S. Air Force chiefs of staff have also visited Laughlin during their terms of office including: Generals Thomas D. White, Curtis E. LeMay and Larry D. Welch. Still others, including General Merrill A. McPeak, visited in other capacities. The wings stationed at Laughlin have earned at least nine Outstanding Unit awards during their tenure here and many new innovations in aviation were created and tested at Laughlin Air Force Base.

It is known that at least 55 general officers have served at Laughlin at least once in their career. The enlisted ranks have also excelled with Thomas N.

Barnes as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and Emory H. Walker as Senior Enlisted Advisor of the Air Training Command. Many others achieved prominence in their careers.

Valor is not an uncommon trait among those who have served at Laughlin.

The following are recipients of our nation's highest awards for valor: United States Air Force Medal of Honor, Lt. Col. Joe Madison Jackson; Air Force Cross, Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr.; Capt. Jesse W. Campbell, and Col. Jacksel M.

Broughton (nominated for second AFC). A minimum of 34 Distinguished Flying crosses were received by those serving at Laughlin during peacetime operations. It is unknown how many were received in combat operations away from Laughlin, but they are quite numerous. Perhaps the greatest accolade ever given to a unit at Laughlin were the remarks of President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 26, 1962: "...the work of the 4080th Strategic Wing has contributed as much to the security of the United States as any unit in our history, and any group of men in our history."

The facilities have undergone a third and fourth generation transition from the temporary tar-papered structures of 1942, to the newest modern facilities just completed. Landscaping had gone from caliche and cactus

**See 'History,' page 14**



(Courtesy photo)

## Marauders on the flightline

Martin B-26 Marauders sit on the Laughlin flightline in 1943. The Army Air Forces opened the Transition Flying School at Laughlin Jan. 1, 1943, to transition pilots into the Martin B-26 Marauder. Laughlin Field graduated 2,924 students as B-26 pilots between February 1943 and September 1945 when the base was deactivated.

# Laughlin Air Force Base named after war hero

By Harry Carroll

Former Laughlin  
public information officer

*This story, written 35 years ago, appeared in 50th anniversary supplement to the Border Eagle.*

Even the newcomer to Laughlin knows the base is named for 1st Lt. Jack T. Laughlin, and most are aware that Laughlin was the first Val Verde County pilot casualty of World War II. Those more closely connected with the history of the base know also that he was shot down in a B-17 over Java in 1942.

It is at this point that the background of this young man becomes – except for family, close friends and acquaintances – clouded by the passage of years.

But for those who saw him, first as a boy growing up in Del Rio, and later as a mature, dedicated man, the memory of Jack Laughlin will remain throughout their lifetime.

Del Rioans who knew him well have no difficulty recalling how young Jack rose through the Boy Scout ranks to attain the rank of



**1st Lt. Jack T. Laughlin**

Eagle Scout in 1931. Or how, while a student at the University of Texas, he spent his summers as a swimming instructor at Moore Park.

Jack T. Laughlin was born in Del Rio, Sept. 17, 1914, the youngest of four children of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Thomas and Ann McGehle Laughlin. He attended the public schools in Del Rio, and in May 1932 graduated from Del Rio High School. For two years

following his completion of high school, young Laughlin worked with archeological excavation crews from the University of Texas and the Smithsonian Institution in Indian caves in the Seminole and Pecos canyons in Val Verde County. Later he enrolled in the university and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1938.

During his years at the university, he spent much of his time in the Anthropology Department. He worked in the laboratory and in the field on weekends and in summer.

After getting his degree in 1938, he was made the supervisor of an archeological laboratory in San Antonio. Here he received artifacts from many areas in Texas and was responsible for restoring, classifying and cataloging these for use in the University of Texas Museum.

How then, with a background and interest so far removed from the military, did Laughlin come to be flying a B-17 halfway around the world on that January day in 1942 when he lost his life?

Fraternity brothers in Lamda Xi say Jack had shown an interest in flying for several years, and Edward Ryan, writing a series of articles on National Defense Activities, said in the June 1941 issue of Twenty-Thirtian, "Jack Laughlin is 26 and hails from down around Del Rio, although he has been living in San Antonio for the past couple of years where he was engaged in archeological work, a line in which he had become interested in college, and which he decided to follow upon graduation. Jack joined his flying cadet detachment because he appreciated the advantages of air corps training and knew it would be impossible for him to obtain better flying instruction anywhere. He thinks being an airline executive should have certain advantages." (Laughlin had joined the Army Corps Aviation Cadet Program in September 1940).

Author Ryan continued, "These last few months we've been learning. Now that we know how to fly, we're

**See 'Laughlin,' page 6**

## Historical fact:

*The plaque outside Building 320 is dedicated to Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Jarvis, who served as superintendent of training devices from 1971 until his death in 1977. Jarvis was an "outstanding noncommissioned officer who devoted many hours, both on and off duty, to ensure peak performance of the present simulator facilities and maximum training time of all student pilots."*

# 4 x 5 WESTERN COMM

**Historical fact:** *Col. Joe Jackson, one of Laughlin's first U-2 pilots, received the Medal of Honor during Vietnam for rescuing three people during intense enemy fire.*

**'Laughlin,' from page 5**

all of us ready to fly our heads off for the good old United States. All the government has to do is send us our orders."

And the orders came not long after that article was written. Laughlin had since completed flying training at several California bases, among them Santa Maria, Moffett, Mather, Bakersfield and Stockton. It was in Stockton on April 27, 1941, that he was awarded his wings and was assigned to heavy bombardment duty at Fort Douglas, Utah.

On Aug. 7, 1941, in the chapel at Fort Douglas, Laughlin married the lovely Mary Fundulakis of Sacramento, Calif.

In December 1941, Laughlin left with a contingent headed for Java. They headed out across the Pacific, but because of Japanese gains throughout the entire western ocean area,

were rerouted to the east. The last letter written by Laughlin was postmarked in Africa Jan. 24, 1942. Five days later, Jan. 29, his B-17 Flying Fortress was lost over the Makasser Straits on its first combat mission.

Laughlin never saw his daughter Jackie, born to his widow in the Station Hospital at Randolph Field, Texas, Aug. 14, 1942.

This then is the story of 1st Lt. Jack Thomas Laughlin. Laughlin, the boy, the student, husband, father, American, who when his country called, answered that call, even though it meant making the ultimate sacrifice.

And for many intimately connected with Laughlin, the story goes on. His widow never remarried and now lives in Sacramento. His mother and father have since passed away.

His daughter, whom he never knew, is now a grown woman. She is married to Henry Lawrence Mitchell II, a British subject. They live

on the family yacht in Malta and also have a home in Cheltingham, England.

They were married in December 1965, and on Oct. 1, 1966, 1st Lt. Jack T. Laughlin's daughter gave birth to a baby girl, Rebecca Blaise Mitchell.

Today, more than 25 years after the death of Laughlin, we again do honor to his name and to his memory. There is no more fitting way we can do this than to assure his widow, Mary Laughlin, his daughter Jackie Mitchell, and his sisters, Mrs. T.D. Moore of Del Rio and Mrs. Frances Weinstein of Houston, and his brother Alfred of Edinburg, Texas, that Laughlin AFB, true to the ideals of its namesake, is busily engaged in producing men as dedicated and as unswerving in their devotion to their country as was the man they knew as husband, father, brother — 1st Lt. Jack Thomas Laughlin.

**Historical fact:** *The olive branch on the 47th Flying Training Wing emblem represents the men and women who are trained by the wing to become fully qualified pilots.*

# Major Rudolf Anderson: U-2 pilot, Laughlin hero

By Capt.

**Dawnita Parkinson**

*Public affairs*

Forty years ago, the entire world learned about arguably the biggest threat the Western Hemisphere has ever faced: President Kennedy publicly announced the buildup of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba – capable of reaching America and beyond – and demanded their withdrawal.

Maj. Rudolf Anderson was among the Laughlin U-2 pilots who played a critical role during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and as the sole casualty from the crisis, he was memorialized Oct. 26 when the Operations Training Complex was renamed Anderson Hall.

Maj. Anderson, as part of the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, was one of 11 U-2 pilots who performed high-altitude reconnaissance over Cuba during the now infamous 13 days between Oct. 15-27, 1962.

Maj. Anderson and Maj. Richard S. Heyser each photographed evidence of the missile buildup – which was happening at a pace rapid enough to result in the completion of six medium-range ballistic missile sites by early November 1962 and three intermediate-range sites by mid-December.

Based on the conclusive evidence in these photos, the military was put on full alert Oct. 19, 1962. By the time Kennedy gave his ultimatum Oct. 22, every major unit was in position and ready. But Soviet Premier Nikita



**Maj. Rudolf Anderson**

Khrushchev, who adamantly denied the buildup, didn't blink, and the world held its breath to see what would happen next.

Then, on Oct. 27, 1962, Maj. Anderson was flying another reconnaissance mission over Cuba. He died when a Russian surface-to-air missile exploded near his aircraft, penetrating his pressure suit with shrapnel. His aircraft crashed into the island.

Afraid of retaliation and realizing America's nuclear arsenal was on full alert, the Soviets announced the next day that they would dismantle the sites and withdraw the missiles.

In the days that followed the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Kennedy told the world that Laughlin's 4080th Strategic Wing contributed as much to the security of the United States as any other unit in history.

"We are particularly indebted to Major Anderson," he said, "... who is symbolic, I think, of the willingness of a good many Americans to take great hazards on behalf of their country."

**Historical fact:** The "XL" logo was designed in 1982 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Laughlin. In addition to the Roman numeral, the logo represents Laughlin's commitment to excellence.

**Historical fact:** President Richard Nixon dedicated the Del Rio Amistad Dam Sept. 8, 1969.



# Major Ribas-Dominicci: *F-111 pilot, Laughlin hero*

**Compiled from  
staff reports**

Maj. Fernando Ribas-Dominicci entered Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laughlin Air Force Base in June 1976.

Following graduation, he was assigned to Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., from July 1977 to February 1983. He held numerous flying positions in the F-111D at Cannon, including pilot weapon systems officer, aircraft commander, training officer, chief of scheduling and training and standardization and evaluation examiner.

In March 1983, Maj. Ribas-Dominicci was transferred to the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, U.K., where he flew the F-111F. While at Lakenheath, he became an F-111 aircraft commander, a flight instructor and a standardization and



(Courtesy photo)

A bust of Maj. Ribas-Dominicci is located in Ribas-Dominicci Circle on Laughlin across from the Leaning Pine Golf Course.

evaluation flight examiner. He graduated from Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in 1982 and completed Air Command and Staff College by seminar in 1984.

Maj. Ribas-Dominicci was killed during a combat

mission in an F-111F fighter-bomber off the coast of Libya in April 1986. He was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal in 1983 and was decorated posthumously for his participation in the raid on Libyan territory in which he lost his life. He was posthumously promoted to the grade of major effective April 15, 1986.

The major was born in Utuado, Puerto Rico, in 1952 and he graduated from San Miguel High School in Utuado in 1970. He attended the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez where he received a degree in civil engineering. He later completed his master's degree in Aeronautical Science at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Bunnell, Fla., in 1985.

He was survived by his wife, Blanca, and a son, Fernando.



Front side of coin



Back side of coin

## Laughlin coin symbolizes 60 years of base history

**Compiled from  
staff reports**

In order to celebrate 60 years of rich Laughlin history, Rob Poteat, 47th Flying Training Wing historian, 2nd Lt. Jessica Miller, 47th FTW Public Affairs, and Memo Lopez, 47 Communications Squadron visual information, developed the concept for Laughlin's 60th Anniversary coin design.

"Imagine how far we've come since the first B-26 Marauders filled the southwest Texas sky," said Poteat. "To help commemorate the B-26 and 1942, the design incorporates this along with Laughlin's future trainer (T-6A Texan II) and 2002, which is the year it will arrive here."

Standing in the center of the coin is the 47th Flying Training Wing emblem as approved Jan. 2, 1973. The blue and yellow signify the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air

Force people. The branch stands for the men and women who are trained by the wing to become fully qualified pilots. The students strive to accomplish those training goals, as represented by the wing. The lightning flash symbolizes the successful students who take their places as pilots in the Air Force to defend the peace.

The coin's reverse side shows silver wings, which represent Laughlin's "Training the World's Best Pilots." Laughlin's "XL," the Roman Numeral 40, is also used. Designed by John Stein and adopted for Laughlin's 40th anniversary, it was registered as an official Texas livestock brand and has been retained and incorporated into the 60th anniversary coin design because it signifies an ever present determination to "excel." It has also become a part of the Laughlin tradition and is used as the tail flash on aircraft assigned to the 47th Flying Training Wing.



(Courtesy photo)

## Blast from the past

Shown is the base operations building as it appeared in 1959. The base operations building served as the center of Laughlin's flying activities in the days of the 4080th Strategic Wing. The insert shows a bronze plaque, which commemorates Lt. Jack T. Laughlin, an Army Air Corps pilot from Del Rio who was killed in World War II, for whom the base is named.

**Historical fact:** Para-sailing was tested at Laughlin and officially made part of pilot training in 1966.



# Laughlin celebrates 60 years,

1940 ————— 1950 ————— 1960 ————— 1970

## January 1942

Lt. Jack Thomas Laughlin was killed in a B-17 over Java. This was his first combat mission.

(See related story on page 6.)



Lt. Laughlin

## Sept. 26, 1942

The War Department activated an advanced flying training base seven miles east of Del Rio, Texas.

## March 3, 1943

The base was designated Laughlin Army Air Field in honor of Lt. Laughlin. He was the first member of the Del Rio community to lose his life during World War II.



B-26

## 1942-1945

Laughlin used for B-26 Marauder training.

## Oct. 30, 1945

Army Air Forces Training Command closed Laughlin when the war ended in Europe. The field was leased to local ranchers for goat grazing.

## May 1, 1952

Reactivated by the Air Force as Laughlin Air Force Base. Laughlin provided training in the F-84 and the T-33 aircraft.



T-33



U-2

## April 1, 1957

Laughlin's mission changed to become an operational Lockheed U-2A and RB-57D Canberra base. These aircraft provided a high-altitude reconnaissance capability and gathered meteorological data.

## June 31, 1961

Headquarters U.S. Air Force notified Laughlin officials that their mission would expand to include an undergraduate pilot training program.

## Nov. 20, 1961

The first UPT class arrived at Laughlin. The T-37 Tweet and the T-33 aircraft were being used.

## May 28, 1964

The Northrop T-38 Talon was assigned to UPT to phase out the T-33.



T-38s

## Oct. 14, 1962

A Laughlin U-2 pilot, Maj. Richard S. Heyser, brought back the first conclusive evidence of the Soviet missile buildup in Cuba. President Kennedy met with Maj. Heyser after the 13 days known as the Cuban Missile Crisis.

## Oct. 27, 1962

Maj. Rudolf Anderson, a Laughlin U-2 pilot, was killed in action over Cuba.

(See related story on page 8.)



Maj. Anderson



T-37



T-41

## 1965-1973

The T-41 Mescalero single-engine plane was used to train pilots prior to entering the T-37 phase.

# looks forward to bright future



**Sept. 1, 1972**

The 47th Flying Training Wing was activated at Laughlin Air Force Base, replacing the 3646th Pilot Training Wing.

*(See related story on page 4.)*

**1979**

The flight simulator complex opened to enhance student pilot training at Laughlin.

**Feb. 25, 1981**

Laughlin's first female pilot, 2nd Lt. Kimberly D. Baird, graduated.



**Lt. Baird**

**July 2, 1982**

The wing adopted the XL logo to commemorate Laughlin's 40th anniversary. The logo is registered with the State of Texas as a cattle brand.

*(See related story on page 9.)*

# XL



**Maj. Ribas-Dominicci**

**April 15, 1986**

Maj. Fernando Ribas-Dominicci, a Laughlin UPT graduate, was killed in action flying his F-111 in an air raid against Libya. Laughlin named Ribas-Dominicci Circle in his honor.

*(See related story on page 9.)*

**1986**

Simulators converted to computer-generated imagery, providing cost savings and training realism.



**OTC, now known as Anderson Hall**

**1988**

The Operations Training Complex was opened for pilot training.

**June 1989**

Aircraft maintenance function was converted to a civil service operation. This was the first function in Air Training Command operated by an all-civil service work force.

**1993**

The 47th FTW implemented specialized undergraduate pilot training and acquired the T-1A Jayhawk.

**April 1, 1998**

The 96th Flying Training Squadron was activated and became the first Reserve squadron to support SUPT pilot training.

**Oct. 26, 2001**

The Operations Training Complex was dedicated to Maj. Rudolf Anderson. The building is now known as Anderson Hall.

**Jan. 31, 2002**

First Lt. Chad Carlson and 2nd Lt. Nick Jabara lost their lives in a T-37 crash in Spofford.

**Fall 2002**

Laughlin will start to phase out the T-37 Tweet with the T-6 II Texan.



**T-6 Texan II**

**Future of Laughlin**

The future of Laughlin is to continue to train the world's best pilots.



Laughlin's three training aircraft – (from left) T-1, T-37 and T-38 – fly in formation over Laughlin.

## Did you know? *Test your knowledge of Laughlin history*

1. In July 1942, the War Department officially established an Army Air Forces station on a site selected by the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee. The AAF changed the mission three times, however, before the base became operational.

In 1943, the AAF brought in the B-26 Marauder and opened which school here:

- (a) AAF Advanced Flying School
- (b) AAF Bombardier School
- (c) AAF Transition Flying School

2. While assigned to the Third Air Force, the 47th Bombardment Wing, the predecessor of the 47th Flying Training Wing, was stationed at Royal Air Force Sculthorpe, England, from June 1952 to June 1962 and flew the B-45.

The wing's mission from June 1952 to June 1962 was:

- (a) Training in bombardment operations, including combat crew training
- (b) Providing nuclear deterrence during the Cold War
- (c) Operating the United States Air Force Air Crew School (Light Bombardment and Tactical Recon)

3. The 47th Flying Training Wing can trace its heritage back to World War II and the illustrious combat record of the 47th Bombardment Group. Which of our present day flying training squadrons traces its lineage to the 47th Bomb Gp as well?

- (a) 85th and 87th FTSs
- (b) 85th and 86th FTSs
- (c) 84th, 85th and 86th FTSs

4. In October 1952, Laughlin's mission changed to advanced fighter pilot training in the F-84 and T-33. Training was delayed for which of

the following reasons:

- (a) Lack of suitable gunnery ranges
- (b) Lack of facilities, housing and instructors
- (c) Students earmarked for Laughlin were sent to other bases.
- (d) All of the above

5. More than 40 years ago, on April 1, 1957, jurisdiction for Laughlin transferred from Air Training Command to Strategic Air Command to provide a home for the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

The wing's mission was to provide a reconnaissance capability and to gather meteorological data from high altitudes for operational forecasting.

In addition to the U-2, the wing conducted its mission using the:

- (a) RB-57D
- (b) UC-78
- (c) RF-4C

6. Strategic Air Command moved the 4080th Strategic Wing to Laughlin in April 1957. While at Laughlin, the 4080th participated in many operations. Which statement below is not correct?

- (a) While flying over Cuba, the 4080th took photographs that provided the U.S. with the first conclusive evidence of the suspected introduction of Soviet long-range offensive missiles into Cuba.
- (b) During Operation Crow Flight, the 4080th conducted high-altitude air sampling missions near Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- (c) The U-2's production and operational history remains classified until the year 2010. The Cuban mission is known only because the reconnaissance flight originated from Laughlin.

**See 'Answers' page 13**



(Courtesy photo)

### Looking back

Shown is the 47th Flying Training Wing headquarters building as it appeared in 1953.

**Be a part of future Air Force history. Join now!**

*Call Del Rio's Air Force recruiter at 774-0911.*

## 'Answers' from page 12

1. The correct answer is (c). The Army Air Forces opened the Transition Flying School Jan. 1, 1943, to transition pilots into the Martin B-26 Marauder. Laughlin Field graduated 2,924 students as B-26 pilots between February 1943 and September 1945 when the base was deactivated.

2. The correct answer is (b). The 47th was the only bomb wing permanently stationed in Europe with nuclear capability. It flew the B-45 Tornado, America's first jet bomber, capable of carrying two 10,000-pound nuclear weapons.

3. The correct answer is (b). The 85th and 86th can both claim the heritage of the 47th Bomb Group. The 84th Pursuit Squadron (later Fighter), the predecessor of the 84 FTS, was activated in 1942 and assigned to the 78th Pursuit (later Fighter) Group. The 87 FTS traces its lineage back to 1917 when it was designated as the 87th Aero Squadron.

4. The correct answer is (d). When reactivated in May 1952, only the runways were still intact. Even though the base had to be rebuilt from scratch, two student classes were redirected to other training bases.

5. The correct answer is (a). The RB-57D entered SAC's inventory in May 1956, with production ending that December. Only 20 "D" models were produced.

6. The correct answer is (b). The 4080th Strategic Wing's mission was to conduct strategic reconnaissance operations on a global scale. Laughlin chronologies indicate the 4080th participated in several such operations here.



# Flying training squadrons have interesting histories



## 84th Flying Training Squadron

- Activated in early 1942 as a pursuit squadron
- Trained in the U.S. and moved to England in 1942
- Flew escort missions, engaged in counter-air activities and attacked enemy targets
- Supported 1944 Allied landing at Normandy and contributed in the breakthrough of the USS Saint Lo
- Participated in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944
- Served as part of the occupation forces until it transferred to the U.S. in June 1947 when it assumed an air defense mission
- Now trains student pilots in the T-37 Tweet.



## 85th Flying Training Squadron

- Activated Jan. 15, 1941, as a bombardment squadron.
- Began training and moved to North Africa; became part of the 47th Bomb Group and changed to the A-20 Havoc aircraft.
- Started flying low-level

bombing missions

- In 1943, an undermanned and under-supplied 85th flew missions attacking the advancing enemy's armored columns at Kasserine Pass.

- Participated in numerous combat missions during World War II

- Returned to the U.S. in 1945 and was one of the first squadrons to fly the B-45 Tornado.

- In 1962, the 85th was deactivated and reactivated later as the 85th FTS.

- Has performed the primary training mission in the T-37 Tweet for 30 years



## 86th Flying Training Squadron

- Activated Jan. 15, 1941, as a bombardment squadron
- Journeyed through Europe and North Africa, stationed in 20 different locations

- Supported combat operations with the DB-7, A-20 and the A-26 aircraft

- In 1945, the 86th returned to the U.S. to train in support of a new mission of night tactical operations.

- On March 22, 1972, the 86th was redesignated as the 86th FTS at Laughlin, replacing the 3646th Pilot Training Squadron.

- Its training mission is to use the T-1 "Jayhawk" for Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training.



## 87th Flying Training Squadron

- Became part of the 87th Pursuit Squadron in 1936

- Demobilized in 1938

- Redesignated the 87th Fighter Squadron in May 1942, flying the P-40 Warhawk

- In 1944, converted to the P-47 Thunderbolt

- In November 1952 the 87th was reactivated flying the P-51 Mustang.

- In 1960, changed to the F-101 Voodoo

- In 1985 the squadron was deactivated; it was reactivated at Laughlin in 1990 with the mission of undergraduate pilot training in the T-38.



## 96th Flying Training Squadron

- Activated in 1942 flying the P-38 Lightning

- Deactivated later that year

- In April 1998 the squadron was reactivated as the 96th FTS at Laughlin.

- Is the first squadron in the Air Force with instructor pilots teaching students in the T-37, T-38 and T-1



(Courtesy photo)

## Flashback

Shown is an early photo of the enlisted mess hall from some time in the 1950s.

## 'History,' from page 4

to green grasses, palm trees and leaning pines.

From the arrival of the first Martin B-26 Marauder Jan. 10, 1943, to the anticipated arrival of the Raytheon T-6 "Texan II" for duty at Laughlin in just a few months, the primary mission aircraft have provided our country with far more value than their initial purchase price. In addition to the Martin B-26 Marauder were the Douglas A-26 Invader, the Lockheed F-80 Shooting Star, Republic F-84 D/E Thunderjet, Lockheed T-33 T-bird, Cessna T-37 A/B Tweet, Lockheed U-2 A/H Dragon Lady, Martin RB-57 D/D2 Black Knight, Northrop T-38A Talon, Beechcraft T-1A Jayhawk and, of course, the expected Raytheon T-6 Texan II.

The mission at Laughlin has always been to train the best pilots in the world. After the establishment of the first headquarters in the old Roswell Hotel during construction, the mission changed from advanced flying school to bombardier training, and by December 1942, the base was designated the first Martin B-26

Marauder Transition Training base in the command. About 90 pilots graduated every three weeks and went to MacDill Field, Avon Park or Barksdale Field, where combat crews were joined together prior to going overseas into combat. In late 1944, a few Douglas A-26 aircraft arrived at Laughlin for use in training. After reactivation on May 1, 1952, Col. William T. Samways, with four North Korean aerial victories to his credit, demonstrated the first jet aircraft in the skies over Del Rio and Laughlin. From October 1952 through December 1955, students received combat crew training in the Republic F-84 Thunderjet and jet transition and basic fighter gunnery training in the Lockheed F-80 and T-33 aircraft. Two gunnery ranges were used for the air to ground missions using .50 caliber machine guns, three pound marking bombs and aerial rockets.

From September 1956 until April 1957, Basic Single Engine Jet Training was conducted in the Lockheed T-33. The Strategic Air Command assumed control over Laughlin in April 1957, when the historic 4080th Strategic Wing brought its Lockheed

U-2A and Martin RB-57D, D0, D1, D2 aircraft to Laughlin. They conducted global strategic air operations including high altitude stratospheric sampling of nuclear debris, peripheral aerial reconnaissance flights and actual overflights over denied territories.

Three Martin RB-57Ds, very high altitude aircraft of the 4025th SRS, which would return to Laughlin, their new home, entered denied airspace over Vladivostok at about noon Dec. 11, 1956, the last Air Force recon mission over the Soviet Union or Iron Curtain countries until Oct. 14, 1962. That's when another Laughlin pilot of the 4028th SWRS, Maj. Steve Heyser, would over fly the San Cristobal area of Cuba and take definitive discovery photos of Soviet ballistic missiles, which would create the 13 day "Cuban Missile Crisis."

On Oct. 27, flying a "special mission," Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr. would become the only combat casualty of the crisis. He was killed when his aircraft was downed by the near miss of a Russian surface-to-air missile.

The pilots flying those critical missions knew the surface-to-air

missiles were active and could reach their altitude. In September 1959, Capt. Wang Ying Chin became the world's first casualty by a surface-to-air missile when his Martin RB-57D (former Laughlin-based aircraft) was shot down near Beijing.

In addition to its global reconnaissance operations, the 4080th Strategic Wing had been busy training pilots in the Martin RB-57D and Lockheed U-2 aircraft. The Air Training Command assumed control over Laughlin on April 1, 1962, with the first class graduating in early December. Undergraduate pilot training was the mission of the 3645th Flying Training Wing, redesignated the 3646th FTW and the 47th FTW until November 1993, when specialized undergraduate pilot training was implemented by the wing.

Laughlin Air Force Base is the largest industrial complex in Val Verde County. Its product: the world's best pilots! To sustain that production for more than 60 years is a tribute to the teamwork of all who have served and those who presently serve at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas... A place of history... a place of excellence.

### Historical fact:

*Ribas-Dominicci Circle was named after Maj. Fernando Ribas-Dominicci, who was a member of Laughlin Undergraduate Pilot Training Class 77-05. Dominicci was killed in action April 15, 1986, while flying in an air raid against Libya. The air raids were a retaliation for Libyan terrorist attacks against United States citizens abroad.*